Program information:

1. What are the philosophical underpinnings of the program?

The program training is guided by a philosophy that incorporates the following values and commitments:

- A social constructionist-systemic orientation that regards knowledge as produced through social interaction and as, therefore, subjective rather than objective and true. Thus, therapists hold a tentative and inquiring stance in learning about clients' experiences and in considering the effects of their own perspectives on clients' lives.
- Multicultural/cross-cultural development that invites examination of understandings of difference, language, history, and power and their effects in people's lives and advances the ability to address these factors in therapy and other relationships.
- A community-focus to prepare for serving underserved and poorly served populations.
- Social responsibility and change to consider the therapist's role in relation to social contribution, impact, and leadership for growth in mental health systems.
- Personal growth, to support the exploration of one's own storied life, including cultural identities and experiences, consider the effects of experiences in social relationships, and open oneself to new personal behaviors and perspectives.

2. How long is the program?

The SDSU MFT program is now a 2-year program.

3. Does the program have its own clinic?

Yes, the Dede Alpert Center for Community Counseling and Engagement (CCCE). Most trainees will conduct initial client work at this site. Location: Suite 215# 4283 El Cajon, Blvd. San Diego, CA 92105

What to expect:

4. What will my first semester look like?

Incoming students spend the first 5 weeks of summer completing the online components of MFT courses. Once completed, students will then spend the remainder of the summer coming together as a cohort in all day face-to-face classes (9am-6pm) most days not including Saturday or Sunday. Summer classes will typically be held off campus, at the Dede Alpert center for Community Engagement. Upon completing summer sessions, students will then be eligible to see clients in the fall.

5. Can I attend the program and work?

The MFT program is full-time masters program. It may be possible to work in paid employment part-time. However, to do so places serious stress on the MFT trainee in being able to produce quality work and develop advanced clinical skills. Some semesters and summers are more intense than others. Much of the skills and knowledge obtained in
the program is contingent upon how dedicated one is to learning the professional literature and the nature of the clinical environment.

6. Is there a part-time option to acquiring an MFT degree?
This is a full-time program and the cohort start their classes together at the beginning of June. The cohort work closely together over two years and two summers. No part-time option is available at this time.

Information about classes/ scheduling:
7. What is the average class size and structure?
Classes are grouped as a “cohort” and students complete all classes together. Each Cohort consists of approximately 30 students per class. The first classes in the summer begin in a block format (6 to 8 hour blocks) and students participate in face-to-face learning using an experiential approach. Some classes are conducted in a circle format. Other classes include small practicums (6 people) where trainees deliver therapy services to clients under live supervision. There are also traditional lectures, small group collaborative learning, and field-work training experience.

8. Do I have to take the classes assigned to me, or can I assemble my own schedule?
There will be predetermined classes and schedules for each semester. Class spots are reserved for each student during registration. Students are expected to register for all required classes. Add codes to enroll in classes are typically sent out via email prior to registration times.

9. Am I able to see the schedule outline for each semester before I begin?
Your Graduate Assistant will communicate all scheduling via email prior to registration for those admitted into the program.

10. How much time is spent in class? Will I be with the same group of people?
Class times will vary from semester to semester. All scheduling information will be provided to students via email. Students will stay predominately with their cohort throughout the entire program. In a small number of cases, classes may include more than one cohort.

11. Will all classes be held on the SDSU campus?
Classes will be held at the SDSU main campus and at the CCCE clinic located 7 minutes drive from SDSU. Check class schedule prior to purchasing the SDSU parking permit. There will be semesters where all classes are held at the Dede Alpert Center for Community Engagement.

12. What should I expect from our classes?
Classes consist of various learning outcomes and styles that vary from lecture, group work, and on-site experiences. Students can expect to participate in Micro-counseling Skills courses that allow members to practice counseling with each other to develop the fundamentals of working with clients.
Community based work is also incorporated into the curriculum. Students are expected to work within different cultures and communities during the completion of course requirements. Students are exposed to various ethnic and other cultural populations to strengthen cultural competencies to better prepare for therapy with diverse clients. Cultural competency is a vital part of this program. Many of the classes are designed to educate students on how to work with different populations requiring mental health services.

While there are traditional lecture based courses, there will be classes that are guided by the students. Students in the first summer and fall participate in an “unstructured group,” an activity in which students have the opportunity to engage with their cohort in experiential personal-professional growth. Courses structured in this fashion are intended to allow for a safe space for growth while encouraging cultural or familial self-exploration.

Students learn a lot about cutting edge counseling theories and practices that meet the needs of our diverse communities. Strength-based counseling models and the introduction to recovery practices for those with mental health issues are significant elements of the program.

13. Are classes primarily held in the day or evening?
Class times fluctuate by semester. As a full time program classes may be held at any time Monday through Friday. Many of the classes are in the evening in the first year. Occasionally, there are one-day courses held sometime on a weekend.

Information about client work:
14. What is the difference between Practicum, Traineeship and Internship? Do I get paid?
The Practicum is where students begin to work with clients and this is conducted at the Center for Community Counseling & Engagement during the first fall and spring semester. Students participating in a practicum are now referred to as MFT Trainees who are qualified to see clients. They provide mental health services to clients under direct supervision by a selected supervisor. The Practicum commitment is typically 5 hours per week.

The Traineeship is where trainees collect the majority of their required client hours. Trainees will commit to anywhere between 15-25 hours per week at their chosen site. For every 10 hours of client work trainees are required 2 hours of individual supervision, which will be provided as part of the Traineeship.

The Internship occurs once trainees have graduated with their degree. The trainee submits a request for an intern number once all pre-requisites are met and then becomes an MFT Intern. Interns will then have the opportunity to complete the remaining hours for licensure, if they chose to do so. Practicum and Trainee work is not paid. Interns will seek employment and once employed are paid at a rate lower than a Licensed MFT.
15. What are my options for Traineeship sites? What is expected of me? Is there assistance?
The MFT program offers trainees clinical sites that provide a range of different experiences and a variety of populations to work with. The program will assist students in gaining a placement and is proactive in terms of helping trainees find what fits best. Our current trainees are providing clinical services at our clinic (CCCE), Project IMPACT, St. Vincent De Paul, three High Schools, a Middle School and four elementary schools, Rady’s Children’s Hospital, San Diego Hospice, CCCE In-home therapy, YMCA, Breaking Cycles, Human Resource Associations, License to Freedom, Families Forward, Mental Health Systems and more.

16. What if I don’t feel comfortable seeing clients after the initial summer semester?
The initial summer semester entails rigorous coursework, which is designed to best prepare students for working with clients. The sites students will be working with understand the experience level and are eager to work with students at their own pace. Supervisors will be assigned to each site and help in anyway they can. Many of the sites offered to our students tend to work with underserved populations that lack mental health services. Many of the sites are thrilled to have MFT students become a part of their team to assist clients who would not otherwise have access to these services.

17. Will I have enough time to complete my hours and keep up with my classes?
Class schedules are structured to support students in completing their hours. There tends to be anxiety around completing the required hours at various sites. Most of our sites have the means to complete both relational and individual hours. Sometimes this is contingent upon a student’s ability to reach out to their sites and expose themselves to different avenues and resources that are available to them. It is important to keep track of hours and know where you stand at all times. During the traineeship, students should be averaging 15 client hours per week to collect the required hours.

Students are required to be enrolled in a traineeship course at all times, while working with clients. The traineeship course is intended to allow a space for students to communicate questions around collecting hours, documentation required for graduation, questions regarding their site supervisor, and any other inquiries about a particular site or client work.

Graduation requirements:
18. How many hours are needed for graduation, and how are they broken down?
Students will need 500 hours total for graduation. Two hundred and fifty hours out of the 500 are for individual therapy, and 250 out of the 500 are relational (this can be family, couples, and siblings). Relational hours are doubled, requiring students to only need 125 hours which will later double to 250. The Majority of your hours will be completed at your traineeship site.

In addition to client hours, students will need to complete 50 live supervision hours. Supervisor will need to accompany students during session or through a two-way mirror. Live supervision can also be in the form of audio or video.
19. What happens if I don’t complete all my hours in time for graduation?
The program is structured to best optimize ones eligibility to graduate on time. It is important to attend all traineeship courses, keep track of hours, and keep in continual open communication with the traineeship professor. If at any point students feel unsure of their status, they are encouraged to reach out to the program.

In the case that hours are not completed in time for graduation in May, students have the opportunity to finish the remaining hours and apply for graduation in August.

Enrollment questions:

20. How many applications do I need to submit?
Two CSU mentor and program applications. Both are online and may have different deadlines and requirements. Both the, SDSU requirements and the MFT program requirements are needed in order to a complete application.

http://go.sdsu.edu/education/csp/mftadmissions.aspx

21. Can I meet with someone to discuss the program?
Orientations with faculty are held twice in the fall. Email ga.sdsu.mft@gmail.com for information or check our website for dates.
   *http://go.sdsu.edu/education/csp/mft.aspx

22. When will the application be available?
Early fall, check website regularly for updates.
   *http://go.sdsu.edu/education/csp/mft.aspx

23. Is there a preference of who writes my recommendation letters?
Past applicants have submitted letters from former employers, professors, community leaders, and other people who know them well. A recommender’s background in psychology or counseling area is not required. The best recommendations come from those who can speak to a student’s professional qualifications and interpersonal qualities.

24. I am unable to scan at home. May I mail the required documents directly to the department?
All documents must be submitted through the online application. Emails, faxes, or mailed copies will not be accepted.

25. Does the department have a minimum score for GRE's?
No.

26. Do I need to submit unofficial and official GRE scores to you and CSU mentor?
Yes. Please submit official scores to San Diego State University and self-report on our online department application.
27. I have a post bachelor’s degree (masters, PhD. Etc.). Am I required to take the GRE’s?
No. Persons with graduate degrees are not required to take the GRE's.

28. How many applicants are accepted in comparison to those who have applied?
Approximately 15-20% of applicants are accepted into the program.

29. Can I transfer from another program?
You must apply to the program as a new student. Up to nine approved units can be awarded to transfer students in they have the necessary content.

30. I'm an international student, how can I obtain more enrollment information?
Admissions process to the university for international students: http://www.isc.sdsu.edu/
Both SDSU requirements and the MFT program requirements are needed in order to have to have a complete application.

Faculty information:
31. What can I expect from the professors? What are they like? How accessible are they?
The Professors in the program are highly involved with the MFT classes, the training, supervision, and monitor and pay attention to student’s experiences. The professors and other department members are readily available and diligently pay attention to students needs. Students get to know the professors on both an academic and personal level. Many of them work from a Constructionist and Systemic school of thought, which is incorporated into their teaching styles. They collaborate with students and recognize their different needs while acknowledging that “one size does not fit all”.

“My professors played a vital role as I grew, not only into a therapist, but a better version of myself” – Sabrina Shammas

“The professors are very involved. They are caring and passionate. They push you to be the best therapist you can be.” – Sheila Overman, MFT Alumni

“The faculty are very approachable, supportive and helpful.” – Turkan Yildirim

32. What is the faculty’s theoretical orientation and what does that mean for the program?
While the theoretical orientation varies among the faculty, many position themselves within a constructionist-systemic orientation that regards knowledge as produced through social interaction and is, therefore, subjective rather than objective and true. Thus, therapists hold a tentative and inquiring stance in learning about their clients' experiences and view the client as the expert on their own lives. The therapeutic task is viewed as helping clients access their own strengths, resources and under-utilized knowledge.
33. What if I ascribe to a theory that differs from Post-Structuralism?
Theory courses are offered early on in the program, exposing students to various approaches and philosophies. While many of the classes emphasize post-structural and social constructionist thoughts, students are in no way expected to conform exclusively to these ideas. Students are encouraged to follow what best fits them. Faculty members are knowledgeable on many theoretical levels and are available to provide you with any helpful information.

Finance questions:
34. What is the estimated cost of admission?
This is subject to change. Contact the Office of Admissions for up to date information.
* http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/admissions/costs.html

Historically, Residents can expect to pay approximately $3,922 for basic tuition as a full time student (6.1 units or more) during Fall and Spring semesters. Summer tuition is depended on the number of units taken.
*http://bfa.sdsu.edu/fm/co/sfs/registration.html

For further questions contact Student Account Services: 619-594-5253

35. What kind of financial aid is available?
For detailed information please visit the SDSU office of financial aid.
*http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/fao/

Post Graduation questions:
36. In what ways does this program better help prepare me to transition into a Ph.D. program?
The MFT program offers classes that focus on both qualitative and quantitate research methods to help prepare students in the area of research. Students will also be required to take Research focused course. This can help students build on these research experiences that can begin the preparation for doctoral work. Students are able to exploring different options, and have questions answered, including identifying differences between the Ph.D. Ed.D and Psy.D. In addition to this, students are welcome to interview for the chance to work along side a faculty members current research.

37. What are career opportunities post-graduation like? What are the best ways to find a job?
We find that employment for student’s post-graduation is available. Students are encouraged to make connections throughout their graduate experience and connect with faculty and site resources for possible employment opportunities. Graduate students optimize their chances for employment post graduation by immersing themselves in the clinical work at their traineeship sites prior to graduation.

Here are a few examples of employment our graduating class of 2012 has reported:
- Facilitators for Family Forward in North County
- Jewish Family Services
- School-based family therapists out of *Logan Heights Family Counseling Center*
- SDSU’s CCCE as a LEAD (Linguistically and Ethically Diverse) program intern.
- Interning as a therapist for *Union of Pan Asian Communities*, a San Diego County contracted psychiatry outpatient clinic
- Interning at *Therapy Connection* with the intent to build private practice
- San Diego's VAST (Victim's Assistance Support Team), providing wrap around services to developmentally disabled populations.
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Crisis Counselors
- Emergency Shelter Resident Assistants